Question 2: Describe what is new or different or trending now with respect to distance learning. Include your references so we can read about them too.

After doing some research, I came across the following trends that are accompanying distance learning.

According to a report from the Instructional Technology Council, since 2009, there has been an increase number of distance learning courses that use learning management systems. Blackboard, WebCT and Angel account for 50% of LMS (which is down from previous years), but this is due to an increase in the number of LMS that are available for distance learning courses. (page 15 <http://www.mcca.org/uploads/fckeditor/file/Lokken(2).pdf>)

The ITC also reported that there has been an increase in the number of hybrid/assisted web courses that are offered at universities. Students are increasingly enrolling in courses that offer both online as well as face-to-face instruction to meet their needs. These classes are almost like a 'flipped classroom' but for higher education. (page 11 <http://www.mcca.org/uploads/fckeditor/file/Lokken(2).pdf>)

Hanover Research published a report in 2011 that looks at the trends of distance learning across the globe. They discovered that the most frequently offered distance education programs are in the business and technology fields, but based on their locale, typical courses are offered as well. Also, Africa and India have the largest growing markets for distance education and the highest demand for higher education. As far as the United States is concerned, distance learning is targeted to active military personnel and full-time working professionals as it allows for more flexibility. Finally, another major trend they found was that the United States offers more distance learning courses for undergraduate degrees where as the United Kingdom offers more distance learning courses for graduate programs. <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Trends-in-Global-Distance-Learning-Membership.pdf>

The last new trend that I came across pertains to distance learning and professional development. A UK online paper, The Independent, wrote an article about the increased demand for professional development courses by early to mid-career professionals both in the UK and abroad and how students are using these distance learning classes for all fields of study. What was extremely interesting about this new trend though is that even though these courses are through distance learning, quite a few of these courses use paper-based materials as opposed to digital resources and delivery. Also, despite being in distance courses, many postgraduate learners still want that face-to-face interaction through tutorials and study groups. <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/postgraduate/postgraduate-study/going-the-distance-the-new-trend-for-distance-learning-8500809.html>